

Children's Justice Act Committee
Staffed by the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services
Conference Call
Thursday, April 16, 2020
1:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Meeting Minutes

Members:

Detective Thomas Pyles, Chair
Dr. Kerry Hannan, Vice Chair
Yorri Berry
Mary-Ann Burkhardt
Stephanie Cooke
Elizabeth Hall
Ed Kilcullen
Joan Little
Diane Shaffer
KaeShawn Stewart
Krista Trahan

Guest:

Lauren Fischman, Office on Child Abuse and Neglect, Children's Bureau, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Staff:

Angela Cromwell, Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services
V. Glenn Fueston, Jr., Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services
Kelly Gorman, Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services
Justice Schisler, Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services
Jessica Wheeler, Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services

I. Welcome and Introductions

The meeting was called to order at approximately 1:32 p.m. Members and guests introduced themselves. Mr. Fueston opened the meeting and announced that the Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services (the Office) issued a memo to the Child Advocacy Centers (CACs), in partnership with the Department of Human Services, designating them as essential to ensure suspected cases of child abuse and neglect are still being investigated during this time. The Office is also working to release a PSA on child abuse awareness. The committee will be

notified when the PSA is posted. Mr. Fueston also encouraged committee members to continue bringing issues and barriers to the Office's attention so that the Office can work to address them.

II. Chair's Remarks

Detective Pyles provided opening remarks and highlighted that child abuse reports have decreased and that it is a crucial time for agencies to be connecting with youth.

III. Roll Call

Ms. Gorman took attendance to ensure everyone on the call was marked as present. A quorum was present.

IV. CJA State Activity Update

Lauren Fischman with the Office of Child Abuse and Neglect provided a presentation to the committee highlighting themes and trends from the CJA 2019 Annual Report Review. The main categories reviewed in the reports were:

- Work to enhance policies or protocols
 - Over 88% of states included these types of activities, most related to training
- Linkages to human trafficking
 - Over 71% of states reported linkage to human trafficking
- Strategies for improving trauma-informed handling
 - 65% of states implemented some type of strategy, most related to training
- Development or enhancement of Child Advocacy Centers (CACs)
 - Most states provided training to support CAC teams
- Activities to improve the front end of the system
 - 50% of states had activities to improve frontend hotline and screening practices, most involved mandated reporter training
- State law reform
 - Twenty-two states reported these activities, mostly done by tracking and monitoring proposed legislation
- Evaluation of effectiveness
 - Many states used participant surveys to measure training satisfaction
- Other/programs of interest
 - Building a strong network with medical providers
 - Focusing on populations with special needs
 - Training Native Americans to act as expert witnesses in court cases

Ms. Fischman clarified that CJA funds cannot be used to fund primary prevention programs. CJA funds can be used after there has been contact with the child welfare system and a case has been made. Funds can also be used for the prevention of necessary removal or separation and the efforts needed for this to take place.

Ms. Fischman also provided information on the Children's Bureau's interpretation of 'direct services' which are unallowable through CJA. CJA funds cannot be used to fund a position of someone who has direct contact with the child and family but can be used to fund a supervisory position. If a person provides direct services, funds can also be used for time that is not part of the direct services (ex: administrative duties). CJA funds can also be used to pay for a forensic interviewer to attend a training but not to conduct forensic interviews themselves.

V. Approval of Minutes (January 2020)

Minutes from the January 2019 meeting were provided to members. Ms. Burkhart made a motion to approve the minutes; Mr. Kilcullen seconded the motion. All members were in favor and the minutes were approved.

VI. Grant Updates

Ms. Schisler and Ms. Cromwell updated the committee on changes pertaining to the grants administered by the Office due to the coronavirus. The Grants Division within the Office is working to streamline processes while continuing to provide funding and support to sub-grantees. The Office launched a specific page on the [website](#) with more information on the grant programs during this pandemic. For this quarter only, the programmatic report deadline has been extended to July 15th. Financial reports can be submitted now and are due by April 30th.

Ms. Cromwell informed the committee of two CJAC funding options for fiscal year 2021. The first option is to put out a competitive Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA), like past years, and follow the normal application and review process. However, due to the coronavirus, the timeline for this process will be delayed. The second option is a one year continuation of funding to current CJAC sub-grantees. The Office would not put out a competitive NOFA for FY21 and a second year of funding will be granted to the current CJAC programs. The office recommends this option because programs were not able to do what was originally planned and we do not want to penalize them over something they had no control over. From a data perspective, the Office would have two years of data to review program impact, success, and progress. Regardless of the option the committee chooses, the Child First Training funding award will not stay with the Maryland Police and Correctional Training Commission for another year and that funding will be redirected to the Maryland Children's Alliance.

VII. DHS COVID-19 Updates

Ms. Cooke provided a coronavirus update from Child Protective Services (CPS) within the Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS). All screening offices, except for Baltimore City, are able to work remotely to answer calls from the community. DHS continues to work with Baltimore City to remove barriers to having their staff work remotely as well.

There has been a steady decline in child abuse and neglect reports received by DHS beginning the third week of March. As of last week, calls are down by 78% in comparison with the same weeks during 2019. When compared to time periods, such as summer months when schools are closed, reports are lower than those time frames as well. Currently most calls are coming from law enforcement, biological parents, and mental health professionals. Typically school system staff are the number one reporting source. CPS staff continue to respond to reports meeting the mandated face to face timeframes (24 hours for abuse reports and five days for neglect reports).

VIII. COVID-19 Roundtable

Members and staff provided updates on their agency's response to the pandemic:

- Ms. Wheeler provided information about the PSA on child abuse and neglect. While it is still under development, some ideas for the PSA include: emphasizing the importance of continuing to report, knowing the signs of abuse and neglect, and providing the DHS link for more information on how to report along with DSS phone numbers. The Office will keep the committee updated on the PSA.
- Ms. Trahan, with the Baltimore County Child Advocacy Center at the Baltimore County Department of Social Services (DSS), reports that they have seen a significant decrease in reports. They have set up tele-interviews to use when possible and have a partnership with the GBMC Safe Center to provide acute medical services.
- DHS reports that they are exploring the feasibility of providing tablets to youth in foster care. Tablets can help older youth become more involved and connected through social media and help fight feelings of isolation during the pandemic.
- Several committee members emphasized the importance of establishing safety when providing services remotely, especially tele-health services.
- Detective Pyles of the Annapolis Police Department has also experienced a decrease in reports. It is important to start thinking about what reporting is going to look like when things start to go back to normal and to be prepared for a potential increase in reports.
- Baltimore Child Abuse Center released instructional videos providing guidelines and tips on tele-health and tele-interviewing services.

IX. Old/New Business

Ms. Gorman reminded the committee that the Handle with Care Best Practices Workgroup is still active and encouraged members to participate if they aren't already. Please contact Ms. Gorman for more details.

Next Meeting

July 23, 2020

1:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.

100 Community Place

1st Floor Conference Room, Side B

Crownsville, MD 21032